A Letter from the President

I want to say thank you to everyone who came to last week’s monthly meeting to welcome Commander Jason Lando and help move the OLEA for dogs project forward.

For those of you who could not attend, the Commander introduced himself and explained that he has worked in Highland Park for a number of years during his time on the force and knows his officers well. They are a dedicated group of men and women and he is proud of their commitment to the community. He talked briefly about the crime statistics in our area and passed around a sign up sheet to receive email alerts and stories directly from him to the neighborhood. I will be receiving those emails as well and will share them via the Listserv as I receive them. He also announced that he has started a Twitter account, @pghzone5, if anyone is interested in following what is happening in the zone.

He has added three officers that are dedicated to 311 and general community concerns. One will focus on businesses and the other two on residential issues. Instead of relying on officers to follow-up on non-emergency calls while not responding to 911 calls, these officers will be able to spend their entire shift focused on issues that come in from the Mayor’s office, Council Woman Gross’ office, and 311. He then invited residents to ask him questions.

One of the questions was “What can we [as a neighborhood] do to help you do your job?” The Commander’s response was to identify yourself by name when calling in a complaint or concern. There are many reasons it is helpful, among them is the simple fact that an officer can meet with the caller and get more details about the event. Also, having an actual complaint attributed to a person also gives the police more probable cause to further investigate, where an anonymous complain does not.

Commander Lando plans to attend future meetings with some of his officers so they can hear concerns and praise first hand from the community. He is very much about transparency and open dialog within the Zone to foster the best possible outcome.

The other main topic of the meeting was the OLEA update.

I was very proud of the neighborhood process last year when everyone came together to choose a location for the OLEA. After numerous meetings, the Forestry location was chosen, then put on hold shortly after that process so the City could develop official criteria for OLEAs. That criteria was released last month and the Forestry site was reevaluated. Unfortunately, it did not meet the new criteria in a few significant areas – size and proximity to residents.

Interviews with homeowners directly across from the site were also conducted. Some homeowners had concerns about safety, noise and traffic/parking on a narrow street that already has active park venues such as the Forestry workers with trucks as well as the much utilized tennis courts and the fact that the street is a main artery to the park from the eastern neighborhoods. Many of the neighbors felt adding an additional use was unfair. Their feedback was a large part of the final decision and in the end, the site was not approved by DPW.

I immediately began to work with the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy and DPW on a new location. We are all true partners in this process and we were determined to find a suitable location in Highland Park. Deb Gross’ office also voiced their continued interest in the project.
During the initial process, there was one location that some residents suggested because of its ideal size and location away from homes, but the proposed site was slated for a different use.

The location, known as “Hawthorne Grove,” is the large, flat field across from the sand volleyball courts and park maintenance building by the pool. The Park master plan includes removing the DPW storage facility and creating green space and an overlook in that location to restore the historic viewshed of the Allegheny River valley. Over the past month, PPC and DPW have worked together to adjust their plans so both the OLEA and the Overlook can be accommodated on the site.

The last test was to see what the neighborhood thought about the idea. I am thrilled to report it was overwhelmingly approved at the meeting with only 2 non-dog owners abstaining!

The next step is for the City’s landscape architect to review the site and get started on the initial design. We will hold one more community meeting to review and get feedback on the design of the OLEA, then once we have consensus, construction can begin. We also need to agree on the rules of the OLEA and hopefully form a dog owners association to help monitor the OLEA. I will get back to everyone with a timeframe as soon as one has been formalized.

Happy Spring!

Monica Watt
HPCC President
the city, the civic leadership academy and the new shelter rental website.

In honor of black history month, Highland Parker Lea Blumenfeld gave a talk about two famous African Americans who touched Highland Park – jazz great Billy Eckstine, who was born on Bryant Street and Edith Spurlock Sampson who went to Peabody High School, became a lawyer in 1925 and later worked with the United Nations and NATO. Both were fascinating Americans and part of the fabric of our neighborhood.

The meeting ended at 8:05 p.m. and was immediately followed by a jazz social in honor of Billy Eckstine.

Join us at our April 16th HPCC meeting for a FREE screening of the new Rachel Carson documentary by Highland Park filmmaker Mark Dixon.
Reserve City Park Shelters Online

The Department of Public Works is pleased to announce that they have launched a web-based permitting process for individuals wishing to reserve City Park Shelters and certain rooms in City Recreation Centers and Senior Centers. As part of this improved facility rental process, the City will also begin to accept Credit/Debit cards and e-Check transactions from a checking or savings account.

Beginning immediately, you will be able to visit the online facility reservation site to create a new online account, browse available facilities, and identify which facility would best meet your needs. To access the new online registration site, visit the City of Pittsburgh’s home page, www.pittsburghpa.gov, and click on the link for online facility reservations.

While the new online rental option will provide a convenient means for the public to reserve City facilities without the need to visit a City office, Public Works is still ready and available for anyone who has questions or would like assistance with the process. For assistance, please contact the Public Works Permit Office at (412) 255-2370 from 7:00 am – 3:00 pm Monday – Friday or visit us at 611 Second Avenue, Pittsburgh PA 15219.

Please be aware that because of these changes, the City will not hold a permit day for shelter reservations as we have in past years. All permits for use of a park shelter, recreation center, or senior center must either be completed online using the new website or must be completed in person at the Public Works Permit Office.

For additional information and answers to frequently asked questions, please visit http://registerparks.pittsburghpa.gov.
Here are some helpful hints from Organic Gardening for your garden once the snow has finally stopped falling. Now is the time to prune your trees, climbers (especially Wisteria) and bushes and to start cleaning up dead plants. For more information on gardening, go to www.organicgardening.com.

Preparing the Soil in Spring

How soon is too soon to get started in the spring?
By Pam Ruch

Gradually the late-winter sun rises higher in the sky each day, and its rays are warmer, more intense, even through the brisk March wind. Soon we’re able to eat our evening dinner by daylight. As the late winter snow melts into the earth, I begin to shuffle seed packets and round up the garden tools. I know it’s still too early to dig, but there’s no harm in being ready, is there?

When to Work the Soil

Working the soil too early is a mistake. When the earth is still saturated with melting snow or spring rain, it is easily compacted by treading across it, or even worse, driving heavy equipment on it. In addition, large clumps of wet soil turned over at this time will only bake into impervious clods that will be very difficult to break up later. Plant roots grow best when there are some air spaces between soil particles. Heavy, wet soil doesn’t break up into the loose, air-retaining texture that is best for plants. Its clumpy texture is also likely to trap pockets of air around plant roots, and that is just as bad as no air.

How can you tell whether your garden has dried out enough to be worked? The truest test of soil condition is that age-old gesture of the gardener—fingering a handful of soil. Pick up about half a cup of earth in your hand. Now squeeze the soil together so that it forms a ball. If the ball of earth can readily be shattered by pressing with your fingers or dropping it from a height of 3 feet or so, it is dry enough to dig. If the ball keeps its shape or breaks only with difficulty into solid sections rather than loose soil, it still contains too much water. Clay soil that is too wet will feel slick when rubbed between thumb and forefinger. If it is very wet (75 to 100 percent moisture), the mass will be pliable, and a ribbon of earth can be drawn out and pressed with your finger. Working soil that is wet can spoil its texture for the whole season.

Heavy clay soil will form a ball even when moisture content is less than 50 percent. Soil that is somewhat coarser, a sandy loam or silt loam, tends to crumble when moisture content is low but will probably form a ball at about 50 percent. At 75 to 100 percent moisture, it will be dark, pliable, and may feel slick between the fingers. Coarse-textured sandy soil will not form a ball if moisture content is below 50 percent. At 75 to 100 percent moisture, it can be pressed into a weak ball, but even then it shatters easily. Coarser soil, of course, may be worked at a higher moisture content than fine-particle clay.
This year in Holy Week as a new initiative we’ve invited a number of parish and neighborhood artists and writers to develop the traditional Stations of the Cross in St. Andrew’s Church with artistic and literary expressions. Please join us for a time of meaningful reflection.

Easter morning, April 5, is a festival day of celebration, with a 9 a.m. service of Holy Communion, including organ and hymns, and an 11 a.m. service with Choir and the Pittsburgh Ceremonial Brass. A Champagne Reception and fun Easter Egg Hunt for the kids will follow the later service - in the Churchyard, weather permitting, or in the Parish House.

St. Andrew’s, in the 5800 block of Hampton Street, has been in ministry in the heart of this neighborhood of Highland Park for over a century. If you have a pastoral concern we can help with - a baby to be baptized, a marriage to celebrate, a sick or shut-in family member or neighbor who would appreciate a visit and a blessing, a family to comfort at the time of the death of a loved one - or if you simply would like to borrow a table or find some space for a family gathering too large for your living room, please feel free, whatever your religious background or heritage may be, to give our Church Office a call at 412 661-1245 - or to check us out on the web, standrewspgh.org. We’re always glad to hear from you, and to help if we can.
Mother of all Pottery Sales

Sunday, April 19, 2015
10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Local pottery sale + live demonstrations + hands-on clay activities.

Our annual clay celebration is full of Pittsburgh area ceramic artists exhibiting and selling their work, a live demonstration from nationally renowned ceramic artist, David MacDonald, and clay activities in our studio. So, there’s something for everyone!

Exhibiting artists include:

Chelsey Albert
Molly Bee
Kimberlyn Bloise
Mary Briggs
Nick Buffington
Mattie Cannon
Stephanie Flom
Colleen Harmon
Bryce Hemington
Keith Hershberger
Kyle Houser
Carina Kooiman
Araina Marsden
Martha Matthews
Karen McKee
Samantha Momeyer
Mud Monkey
Ryan Myers
Ryan Rakhshan
Silvija Singh
Garret Smith
Stak Ceramics
Stray Cat Studio
Garick Tai-Lee
Gloria Tsang
Pittsburgh Pottery
UP’s Youth Apprentices
Jenna Vanden Brink
Emmanuelle Wambach
Wolf’s Den Pottery

We’ve invited our buddies from Assemble and Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh to come provide hands-on fun in the studio. Make sure to stop down and get creative with your hands!

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Treasurer
Paul Miller (412) 365-0675
Secretary
Bob Staresinic (412) 441-8972

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Janine Seale
Christine Adams
Kelly Vitti
Andrew Brooks
Jake Pawlak
James McAdams
Nell Gladson
Amber Quick

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Education - Dave Atkinson
House Tour - housetour@highlandparkpa.com
Finance - Glen Schultz
Membership - Kelly Meade (412) 362-0331 membership@highlandparkpa.com
Newsletter - Monica Watt (412) 980-4208 editor@highlandparkpa.com
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Reservoir of Jazz - Tania Grubbs
Super Playground - Monica Watt (412) 980-4208 & Vernon Simmons (412) 661-1366
Yard Sale - Paul Miller (412) 365-0675
Welcoming - Janine Seale
Zoning - Jake Pawlak

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